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Joint Chiefs Find No Soviet Cheating

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 7 — An intelligence estimate made public by the Joint Chiefs of Staff contradicts President Reagan's assertion that the Soviet Union has violated a key arms-control provision.

The President said last month that Moscow had violated its commitment to not deploy more intercontinental missiles and bombers than it had in 1979 when it signed the second treaty to limit strategic weapons.

The new intelligence estimate inconsistent with this is in a report by the Joint Chiefs on the "United States Military Posture," which was presented to Congress this week in connection with the Administration's military spending request for 1987.

President Reagan said in his December report that the Soviet Union had violated the Soviet commitment, made in 1981, to not increase the number of missile launchers and intercontinental bombers above 2,504, the number in place when the second strategic arms limitation treaty was signed.

Difference in Numbers

Mr. Reagan said the number of such weapons deployed by the Soviet Union was "above the 2,504 cap in violation of its political commitment under SALT II."

He added, "Such activity is indicative of a Soviet policy inconsistent with the political commitment."

But the report by the Joint Chiefs says the Soviet Union has 2,477 systems covered by the arms treaty, according to arms control experts who have interpreted the data in the report.

The report by the Joint Chiefs does not specifically address the issue of Soviet adherence to the 2,504 limit and provides a general breakdown of Soviet nuclear forces.

Experts derived the figure of 2,477 by subtracting systems that are not subject to the negotiations on limiting strategic arms's limit on delivery vehicles from the Joint Chiefs's total count of Soviet strategic weapons systems.

The systems that are not covered by the negotiations' limit of 2,504 includes Soviet SS-N-5 missiles that are deployed on Soviet nonnuclear "Golf" submarines and Backfire bombers, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies and other experts.

The report by the military chiefs "confirms that the Soviet Union continues to comply with the SALT 2 treaty by dismantling strategic systems," said Spurgeon M. Keeny Jr., a former deputy director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the president of the private Arms Control Association.

He noted that the Joint Chiefs' report shows that the Soviet Union has continued to reduce its force of SS-11 missile silos and Yankee-class submarines over the last year as it has deployed new weapons.

Mr. Keeny said that "it appears gravely irresponsible for the Administration to have formally charged the Soviet Union in December with the violation of the SALT-2 overall numerical limits when the J.C.S. order of battle now shows them to be well within the required limits."

A spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff said the report was based on unclassified information supplied by the Defense Intelligence Agency as of January 1, 11 days after President Reagan's report was submitted to Congress.

"Even though there might be a slight difference between this report and the one in December, the J.C.S. support the President's latest report on non-compliance," said the spokesman, who added that he could provide no immediate explanation for the discrepancy.

According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff report, the Soviet Union strategic force has undergone some significant changes that have led to a reduction of 16 systems covered by strategic arms negotiations' limits since a similar re-

port was issued by the Joint Chiefs last year. These are said to be among the Soviet changes:

¶ Reducing its force of SS-11 missiles by 70, while deploying 45 new mobile SS-25 missiles.

¶ Removing 15 Bison bombers from its force, while increasing its Bear bombers force by 10.

¶ Withdrawing two Yankee-class submarines, carrying a total of 32 missiles and apparently two Hotel-class submarines carrying 6 missiles from its force.

At the same time, the Soviet Union has added a Typhoon submarine, which carries 20 missiles, and has also added Delta IV submarines, which carry a total of 32 missiles.

A Political Matter

Administration officials said the issue of Soviet violations of the 2504 limit was primarily a political matter of little military importance.

The officials said that when the Presidential report on purported Soviet arms-control violation was prepared last year, intelligence reports showed that the Soviet Union was slightly over the 2,504 limit.

A major reason that the Soviet Union was judged to be over the limit is that the Administration does not accept a Soviet assertion that it has converted some old Bison bombers to aerial tankers for refueling. The bombers, though, have not been flown and are not considered to be part of the Soviet Union's day-to-day operational force.